

BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY, 1919-39

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perty when Poincaré ordered the occupation
 of the Ruhr.
 The Bonar Law Ministry declined to co-operate,
 and the Law
 Officers pronounced the invasion unauthorized
 by the Treaty
 of Versailles, though it was thought best to
 conceal their
 report. At no time since the reconciliation of
 1903 had the
 sentiments of the average Englishman towards
 France been
 so chilly as during the Poincaré~Curzon era.
 Neither the
 Frenchli kwyer nor the British aristocrat wore
 kid gloves. We
 spoke of a *rupture cordiale** but there was not
 much cordiality left.

The old instinct for the Balance of Power may
 have suggested to experts that French predominance in
 Europe was
 becoming excessive, but the reaction of John
 Bull was less
 sophisticated. He disliked the notion of
 trampling on a tnan
 when he is down, a process little calculated to
 increase the
 flow of reparations, and certain to arouse
 passionate resentment
 in a proud nation which was bound to
 recover its strength.
 British apprehensions were confirmed by the
 event. The
 workers of the Ruhr met the invaders with
 passive resistance,
 and the heavy task of feeding the population was
 assumed by
 the Reich. The mark, which had lost half its
 value at the end
 of the war and had since fallen rapidly,
 collapsed under the
 strain. The savings and investments of a thrifty
 people melted
 away in a few months, and in September
 Stresemann, who
 had been summoned to the helm at a moment of
 confusion and
 despair, called off the resistance. The avowed
 aim of the
 occupation had been to stimulate the
 willingness of the
 German people to pay. That object was not
 attained. It is
 astonishing that so able a publicist as Wladimir
 D'Ormesson
 should argue, in his brilliant volume on French
 policy, that
 the invasion was a success both in the material
 and the

psychological field. The results of an ill-advised
adventure
were the ruin of the German middle and lower
middle classes,
the further identification of the struggling
Weimar regime
with humiliation and suffering, and the clearing
of the path for
a Dictator. In the words of Mr. Lloyd George,
the dead hand
of Poincare lay heavy on Europe, and we were
glad to see
him go.

The defeat of the *Bloc National* in May, 1924,
brought more
flexible minds to the Quai d'Orsay. While
Poincare, with his
Clemenceau's mind, regarded the Treaty of Versailles
as a legal
contract which must be enforced regardless of
consequences,
Herriot and Briand, the new pilots, held that
the security of
France would benefit by a *trêve* with Berlin.
Frenchmen,